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Summary record of the 26th meeting
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Chairman: Mr. de Rojas ..... (Venezuela)
later: Mr. Glanzer (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Austria)
later: Mr. de Rojas (Chairman) ..... (Venezuela)

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97-82430 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 4.20 p.m.

Agenda item 96: Sectoral policy questions (*continued*) (A/52/139, A/52/284, A/52/347, A/52/447-S/1997/775, A/52/460)

(c) Food and sustainable agricultural development (*continued*) (A/52/132-E/1997/57, A/52/413; E/1997/73)

1. **Mr. Moletsane** (Botswana) said that the whole world needed to move towards ecological agriculture, which was the only production system that ensured sustainable management of the land base. The use of agrochemicals, heavy machinery and sophisticated technology in modern agriculture had resulted in declining soil fertility which had dampened food production. In that regard, the international community needed to ensure the efficient use of land for greater food production and productivity at the household level. His Government had realized that in order to achieve that goal, it was essential, *inter alia*, to integrate indigenous food production practices and ethics into modern agricultural systems to promote partnership between the Government, non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

2. The international community should view food and sustainable agriculture, environmental conservation and natural resources management and utilization as one issue. Botswana was conducting research to identify natural resources which had nutritious and medicinal value. The intention was to cultivate those natural resources in order to enhance food security at the household level. Botswana was now faced with the formidable task of making the transition to a development process that was economically, socially and environmentally sustainable. However, that transition was threatened by erratic rainfalls, poor soils, fragile ecosystems and devastating drought. While efforts to increase local agricultural production were bearing fruit, his country would continue to need the international community's support.

3. **Mr. A'Ala** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the international community had a moral duty to present and future generations to combat hunger and malnutrition. Cooperation at the international, regional and national levels was important in efforts to attain food self-sufficiency, for national efforts towards the achievement of the objectives of the World Food Summit often came up against major economic obstacles.

4. His Government had given priority to food production and was determined to increase the country's food self-sufficiency. Great strides had been made in diversifying agricultural production. In addition, his Government was working with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and other organizations dealing with food in its efforts to improve rural development. He reiterated his delegation's support for the World Food Summit Plan of Action and its determination to consolidate marketing systems within the framework of regional economic integration. In order to meet the challenges of poverty and malnutrition, the international community must ensure that there was a favourable international economic and trade policy environment. True international solidarity was needed on the eve of the twenty-first century to guarantee a more prosperous life for future generations.

Agenda item 97: Sustainable development and international economic cooperation (*continued*) (A/52/92, A/52/112, A/52/139, A/52/153-S/1997/384, A/52/163, A/52/217-S/1997/507, A/52/284, A/52/318, A/52/432, A/52/447-S/1997/775, A/52/460, A/52/514-S/1997/815; A/C.2/52/L.11 and L.12)

(e) Implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) (A/52/8 and Add.1, A/52/181-E/1997/77, A/52/136, A/52/539)

5. **Mr. Johal** (Acting Executive Director of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements) said that the Centre must concentrate on addressing the two substantive themes of the Habitat Agenda directly, namely, achievement of adequate shelter for all and promotion of socially and environmentally sustainable human settlements development in an urbanizing world. That was essential in order to maintain the momentum of Habitat II, keep all the partners on board and build upon the goodwill and enthusiasm created by the Conference for political and financial support. The Centre must also narrow the scope of its activities and sharpen its focus in order to achieve more. Indeed, given that resources were diminishing, the Centre must learn to do more with less. That would require effective management and administration of its financial and human resources.

6. While changes had been made to the Centre's financial management and structure they needed to be accelerated. The recent management changes at the Centre announced by the Secretary-General, signalled a new phase in the Centre's work, which would be based on vigorous and focused implementation of the Habitat Agenda, a streamlined organizational structure and a programme of work concentrated in priorities and designed to have maximum beneficial impact.

7. A fundamental challenge for the Centre was to mobilize maximum cooperation and support from Governments, United Nations bodies and agencies as well as from its other partners around the world. As far as the Centre's critical financial situation was concerned, even when the necessary and required economies were made, a reasonable level of resources would be critical to its work in the coming years. In that regard, the Commission on Human Settlements had stressed that the Centre must have adequate, stable and predictable funding for its activities, and that resource mobilization, including the urgent need to broaden its funding base, should receive due attention.

8. **Mr. Schumacher** (Luxembourg), speaking on behalf of the European Union, and the associate countries of Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia, and, in addition, Norway, expressed disappointment at the fact that the documentation on the issue under discussion was incomplete and that the Secretary-General's report did not deal in greater detail with the implementation of the Istanbul Declaration. The fact that nearly half of the world's population lived in towns and cities made it even more urgent to consider the question of human settlements as an integral part of the broader context of sustainable development. Growing poverty, the shortage of sanitation services and adequate housing, as well as the lack of jobs and social isolation threatened not only the economic potential of cities, but also social cohesion and political stability.

9. After recalling the need for the establishment of sustainable human settlements, he reiterated the European Union's commitment to the goal of ensuring that everyone enjoyed the right to adequate housing. While Governments were primarily responsible for implementing the Habitat Agenda, the international community should support national efforts. The United Nations would have to adopt a system-wide integrated and coherent approach, as it had in the case of the other conferences.

10. The European Union was concerned at the financial irregularities and working methods of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements, which had been identified by the Office of Internal Oversight Services, and which threatened to jeopardize the Centre's position as one of the focal points for the implementation of the Istanbul Declaration. The Centre must apply effective and transparent management and decision-making methods and make those in charge accountable for their actions. Accordingly, the European Union supported the Secretary-General's proposals for strengthening the Commission and the Centre on Human Settlements.

11. The European Union also welcomed resolutions 16/19 and 16/8 adopted by the Commission at its sixteenth session and called for their implementation as soon as possible. However, there was a need to go beyond corrective action of a strictly administrative and budgetary nature and to carry out a broader restructuring of the Centre. Such restructuring would have to aim for overall revitalization and might benefit considerably from the analyses and recommendations contained in the report of the quadripartite appraisal mission published in March 1997.

12. **Mr. Kyul Ho Kwak** (Republic of Korea) said that, in order to ensure the successful implementation of the Habitat Agenda, existing international cooperation must be further strengthened. He stressed the importance of partnership among local authorities, the private sector and non-governmental organizations in that regard.

13. His delegation commended the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) for its use of urban and housing indicators to monitor the implementation of national plans and activities relating to the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000. The indicators should be made more adaptable to each country's specific conditions.

14. The housing policy of the Republic of Korea would focus, *inter alia*, on the promotion of environmentally friendly construction technologies and improving the housing finance and taxation system. In 1998, his Government would sponsor an infrastructure construction programme aimed at improving the technical capacity of developing countries for national physical planning for sustainable human settlement. It was currently holding consultations with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on the preparation of a physical infrastructure construction programme. Convinced of the importance of local initiatives, the Republic of Korea also planned to link the implementation of the Habitat Agenda to Local Agenda 21.

15. In conclusion, he urged the international community to provide further support to the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements. The Republic of Korea had been contributing to the Centre within its means and would continue to do so. His delegation also supported the proposal to convene a special session of the General Assembly in the year 2001 in order to conduct an overall review and appraisal of the Habitat Agenda.

16. *Mr. Glanzer (Austria), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

17. **Mr. Nebenzia** (Russian Federation) said that his delegation supported the goals and principles of the Habitat Agenda and the Istanbul Declaration on Human Settlements.

Sustainable development had a direct relationship to questions of ecologically sound planning and construction of cities, neighbourhoods, industry and transportation systems. His delegation welcomed the decisions and resolutions adopted by the Commission on Human Settlements, particularly resolution 16/8 concerning the revitalization of the Habitat Centre.

18. The Commission provided an important international forum for architects, construction experts and engineers to share experience on the professional and technical aspects of human settlements. Sustainable development required an appropriate balance between the activities of the Commission on Sustainable Development, the Commission on Human Settlements and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

19. The Russian Federation stressed the importance of the implementation of the Habitat Agenda to the countries in transition, as they were engaged in the reform of their housing sectors. It also agreed with the statement in the report of the Secretary-General that the Centre for Human Settlements must learn to do more with less.

20. **Ms. De La Barra** (United Nations Children's Fund) said that the follow-up activities of UNICEF to the Habitat II process focused on urban children within the framework of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Most of the activities had been developed with the participation of Governments, United Nations agencies, the World Bank and non-governmental organizations.

21. During the Istanbul Conference, UNICEF and its partners had launched the Child-Friendly Cities Initiative, designed for urban children whom previous programmes had not reached. The two main features of the Initiative were the establishment and strengthening of partnerships for concerted action in favour of poor urban children and the development of child-centred local plans of action for the decentralized implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Initiative was also intended to incorporate both Agenda 21 and the Habitat Agenda at subnational levels.

22. With an expanded range of partners, UNICEF had organized a Child-Friendly Cities training workshop in Accra, Ghana to benefit poor urban children in Africa. Mayors and municipal staff from 29 African countries, adolescents, youth, non-governmental organizations and the field staff of a number of United Nations agencies had participated in the workshop. The Child-Friendly Cities Initiative sought to develop the current advocacy role of mayors into one of promotion and coordination of child well-being activities. Mayors would also act as leaders in the development of participatory local plans of action for children.

23. UNICEF had also explored linkages with the Healthy Cities Programme, an initiative of the World Health Organization, through its participation in the Urban Childhood Conference organized by the Norwegian Centre for Child Research in collaboration with Child Watch, a non-governmental organization.

24. UNICEF would soon participate in the International Forum on Urban Poverty, to be held in Florence under the auspices of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements and the municipality of Florence, with the support of the UNICEF International Child Development Centre. The Child-Friendly Cities Initiative would be presented as an example of partnership-building to promote child well-being.

25. **Ms. Odinga** (Kenya) called on the Secretary-General to implement urgently the measures outlined by the Commission on Human Settlements and, at the same time, to ensure the uninterrupted implementation and monitoring of the Habitat Agenda.

26. As host country, Kenya hoped to see effective and transparent management of human and financial resources at the Habitat Centre. In that connection, it took note of the Secretary-General's proposals concerning the need to take immediate steps to strengthen both the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Habitat Centre and welcomed the reaffirmation that the mandates of UNEP and Habitat would be retained. The reform programmes of the two institutions must fully take into account the relevant General Assembly resolutions on their respective mandates and the pressing need for new and additional resources for their programmes. Her delegation was concerned at the inadequate financing of the Centre, following the decision by certain donors to withhold funds pending the reform of the Centre's management. It wished to thank those States that had provided funds to the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation in the recent past and appealed to all those which had not yet done so to honour their commitments. The Centre must have stable, predictable and adequate financing in order to fulfil its mandate. It therefore urged the General Assembly to adopt the draft resolution recommended by the Commission on Human Settlements in its resolution 16/2.

27. In conclusion, she warned that the proliferation of Habitat subregional offices and the trend of earmarking funds could have an adverse impact on the Centre's performance.

28. *Mr. de Rojas (Venezuela) resumed the Chair.*

29. **Mr. Tanç** (Turkey), said that one of the most successful local initiatives in the follow-up of Habitat II had been the Bodrum Habitat Conference, which had been jointly organized by the Mediterranean Academy and the municipality of Bodrum and whose participants had included non-governmental organizations, local authorities and professional organizations. The Conference had adopted a declaration, reaffirming the goals and principles of the Habitat II Conference, and had prepared a local action plan. Similar initiatives for the convening of local Habitat conferences were already under way in more than 10 other cities and towns. The Mediterranean Academy also planned to organize a regional Habitat Conference to deal with problems common to countries around the Mediterranean and to further develop the Mediterranean Action Plan in the light of the Habitat II Conference.

30. Young people in Turkey were also actively involved in the follow-up activities of the Conference. The Turkish division of Youth for Habitat had been involved in an educational campaign among youth around the country, and an international youth conference had been held which had been attended by youth organizations from around the world.

31. His Government was also considering the establishment of a Habitat regional office in Turkey, which would strengthen the Habitat Centre's decentralization and outreach processes. It hoped that all the countries of the region would support the endeavour.

32. His Government supported all the resolutions and decisions adopted by the Commission on Human Settlements during its sixteenth session; in fact, it believed that the language of some of them should have been stronger. For example, resolution 16/12 on the Commission's working methods should have provided for more active and structured participation by local authorities and civil societies.

33. The Centre must not be denied essential financial resources during its transition process. He therefore appealed to those major donor countries which had not yet paid their contributions to do so urgently. In conclusion, he reaffirmed his Government's commitment to contribute to the fulfilment of the goals of the Habitat II Conference.

34. **Ms. Linde** (United States of America) reaffirmed her delegation's strong commitment to the goals of the Habitat Agenda. If it was to play a vital role in achieving those goals, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements would have to operate with complete integrity and transparency.

35. Her delegation welcomed the recent steps taken by the Secretary-General to remedy managerial and financial problems that had impeded the Centre from implementing the decisions adopted by the Habitat II Conference. However, further action was necessary in order to restore the confidence of both donors and the beneficiaries of the Centre's work. In particular, the issues of fiscal accountability, oversight, financial responsibility, reform of its work programme and management must be addressed. Her delegation called on the Secretary-General to ensure that the Centre met the reform benchmarks set by the Commission on Human Settlements at its sixteenth session, particularly those dealing with budget, finance and work programme reform.

36. **Mr. Kondo** (Japan) said that his delegation attached great importance to the improvement of living standards in accordance with the Agenda for Development. In his delegation's view, the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements had taken a landmark decision in recognizing that the issue of human settlements was of concern to developed and developing countries alike. At the Conference and in other forums, Japan had stressed the importance of maintaining close cooperation with all partners, including local and national governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations.

37. In that context, Japan had opened a regional office of the Centre in the city of Fukuoka as a further step in the decentralization of the Habitat Centre's activities and their enhancement at the regional level. Japanese partners were providing substantial support to the office and, consistent with Japan's position, a wide range of partners, including non-governmental organizations, were involved in its activities.

38. Management of the Habitat Centre was not as efficient or transparent as it should be. In that connection, the Centre's performance should be considered in the light of the recommendations of the Office of Internal Oversight Services within the larger context of the system-wide reform of the United Nations.

39. The budgetary constraints and other difficulties confronting the Centre were serious problems that demanded urgent solutions. The Centre must endeavour to make the most effective use of its limited resources; if its secretariat did not undergo fundamental reform, the Centre would be unable to carry out its agenda. He also wished to announce that Japan would contribute $660,000 to the Habitat Centre.

40. **Mr. Pranaitis** (Lithuania) said that since independence, Lithuania had completely revamped its shelter policy from a centralized State system to one based on

private initiative, with the Government providing support for socially vulnerable and economically disadvantaged groups. Ninety per cent of public housing had been privatized. The Government had begun an initiative to provide long-term loans for certain eligible citizens wishing to purchase or construct their own housing, and to mobilize other financial resources. It also provided subsidized housing for families, including single-parent families, in difficult circumstances. Rapid privatization had led to a sharp decrease in low-cost housing, and the State was therefore taking steps to encourage the construction of such housing units.

41. It would welcome further assistance with monitoring and analysis of housing and urban indicators from the Centre for Human Settlements.

42. **Mr. Reshetnyak** (Ukraine) said that his delegation welcomed the measures taken in accordance with General Assembly resolution 51/177 aimed at strengthening the mandate of the Commission on Human Settlements and revitalizing the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements. In order to achieve the ambitious goals of the Habitat Agenda, the work programmes adopted at the sixteenth session of the Commission must be fully implemented.

43. The problems raised at the Istanbul Conference were of particular importance to developing countries and countries with economies in transition. Although primary responsibility for implementation of its recommendations lay with Governments, coordination within the international community would facilitate that process. The international financial institutions could also play a more active role in establishing a mechanism to encourage investment in housing.

44. An appropriate legal framework and housing policy infrastructure was being developed in Ukraine, with technical assistance from the European Union. That provided a good example of how international cooperation in the field of human settlements could be translated into practical measures to improve the quality of life for all.

45. **Mr. Hedayat** (Indonesia), noting that the Centre had recently implemented some new procedures for carrying out the Habitat Agenda, said that under the circumstances, it would be unfair to ask the Centre to streamline its activities any further, as it would then be unable to do its work. The Secretary-General should take the necessary measures to provide the Centre with adequate financing as soon as possible.

(a) Renewal of the dialogue on strengthening international economic cooperation for development through partnership (*continued*)

Draft resolution on renewal of the dialogue on strengthening international economic cooperation for development through partnership (A/C.2/52/L.11)

46. **Mr. Mwakapugi** (United Republic of Tanzania), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, drew attention to a number of editorial changes.

(b) Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s (*continued*)

Draft resolution on the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s (A/C.2/52/L.12)

47. **Mr. Mwakapugi** (United Republic of Tanzania) introduced the draft resolution on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and appealed to the Committee to give it positive consideration.

Agenda item 99: Operational activities for development (*continued*) (A/C.2/52/L.7)

(b) Economic and technical cooperation among developing countries (*continued*)

Draft resolution on cooperation between the United Nations and the Southern African Development Community (A/C.2/52/L.7)

48. **Mr. Diseko** (South Africa), introducing the draft resolution, drew attention to a number of changes. The eleventh preambular paragraph should be replaced by the following: "*Expressing* its grave concern at the serious difficulties in the peace process in Angola, as a result of delays in the implementation of the Lusaka Protocol, which are hampering efforts for economic rehabilitation and national reconstruction as well as regional development projects,". The phrase: "which, together with other efforts, would facilitate the process of rehabilitation and reconstruction of the economy of Angola" should be added at the end of paragraph 13. Finally, a new paragraph should be inserted after paragraph 13, the text of which would read as follows: "*Emphasizes* the urgent need of the countries receiving refugees to be assisted by the international community so as to enable them to cope with the resulting economic, social, humanitarian and environmental challenges".

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.